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Alexander Hamilton. By HENRY JONES FORD. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Pp. x, 381.)

It is difficult to imagine a better brief life of Alexander Hamilton, the statesman. Not being in the Boswellian manner, this is not so good a picture of Hamilton the man. But neither space nor, apparently, the plan of the work, permitted much anecdote, description or discussion of personality. Nevertheless, where occasion offers, there are incisive, fair-minded and luminous analyses of character. One lays down the book with a clear grasp of Hamilton's important contributions to American nationality, and a fair idea of the manner of man he was.

After two brief but adequate chapters on Hamilton's antecedents and youth, seven chapters are devoted to the Revolutionary period, with Hamilton's military and political activities, and his marriage to Elizabeth Schuyler. A clear and masterly discussion of Hamilton's part in the making of the Constitution occupies four chapters, in the midst of which is inserted one on his law practice. Hamilton's services in the cabinet and his subsequent political activities occupy three more, while the two concluding chapters discuss his apparent achievements and his real accomplishments.

Uniform fairness, fascinating style and illumination of American political history are the outstanding characteristics of the book. The last trait was to be expected from an author of Mr. Ford's thorough scholarship in this field. As to fairness, not only is Mr. Ford just to Hamilton's opponents—even Burr—but he has succeeded in avoiding that common pitfall of biographers—hero-worship of his subject.

Two quotations exemplify the style and the author's remarkable comprehension of Hamilton's personality and services. "The peculiar heroism of his statesmanship is his utter fearlessness of unpopularity." (p. 168). "Hamilton is an Alan Breck with a genius for statesmanship." (p. 370). These two theses—epitomizing the phases of the subject—are developed most satisfactorily. The present writer has seen no other work on Alexander Hamilton so illuminating. If the rest of the series ("Figures from American History") measures up to the initial volume, the publishers will merit the gratitude of the reading public.

The presswork is excellent, including the proofreading. The book has a fair index and the penultimate chapter contains a discussion of the source and secondary materials pertaining to Hamilton.

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